

Work Session of the Common Council  
Of the City of Plattsburgh, New York  
April 16th, 5:00PM

Present: Councilors Mike Kelly (W2), Dale Dowdle (W3), Paul O'Connell (W4),  
Becky Kasper (W5), Joshua Kretser (W6)

Absent: Rachelle Armstrong

**Properties**

A discussion took place concerning abandoned and run down properties in the City of Plattsburgh. City Inspector Joe McMahon explained the difficulties in addressing properties when it is unclear who owns the property, and whether a property is in foreclosure. Councilor Kelly made reference to an abandoned house on S. Catherine; the inspector has received notice from the maintenance company that is addressing that issue and will give him a plan for cleaning it up. The Stetson Ave. burned building is also now being renovated. Councilor Kasper asked about the Rt. 3 property; Inspector McMahon noted that he is in contact with the owner who is deciding what to do with it, and DPW has erected barriers in the front where the porch is a hazard. Kasper also asked about other buildings that are not abandoned but are an eyesore in neighborhoods, and Inspector McMahon replied that the City enforces the code to its extent. Mayor Calnon responded that we might then look to strengthening our code and standards, and Councilor Dowdle referenced the city of Peekskill, which seems to be doing an effective job of maintaining high standards for zombie properties and blight properties. Mayor Calnon talked about the attempt by the state legislature to strengthen laws concerning abandoned properties that are not in foreclosure or in arrears for taxes, so called "zombie" properties. He also pointed out that there are currently three properties that we can foreclose on; one being the Highway Oil building on Bridge Street that the City might be interested in using to develop the downtown area. Councilor Kasper asked about the potential costs for remediation of the single walled storage tanks, and the Mayor observed that there might be Brownfield funds to fix that problem.

No action was taken at this time and no recommendation was sent to the Council.

**Campus/Community Relations**

Councilor Kasper expressed her interest in revitalizing campus community relations committee. Councilor Dowdle noted that perhaps community members have become so frustrated with the actions of some students that they no longer wish to participate in that conversation. Police Chief Desmond Racicot informed the Council that the College has been responsive to City concerns about student

vandalism, and that such incidents have decreased over the years. When asked if University Police could be proactive in the City, he replied that they cannot take action with students off campus. He also said that we have to apply the law fairly and not make examples of students. Mayor Calnon added that every student who is picked up for drunken disorderly has a letter from the Mayor sent to his/her parents, which can be very effective. Councilor Kelly affirmed that and that there has been positive feedback when City officials go into student housing, and that perhaps we can once again provide magnets with City office information to the students. Councilor Kasper replied that she would contact Student Services at the College to see if they could fund that initiative. Mayor Calnon expressed his support for strengthening campus/community relations, and Councilor Kasper offered to arrange quarterly meetings with community members and police, fire and the inspector's office to renew the dialogue, and to address concerns from the College about the obstructed lighting on Helen St.

This process is referred to the Quality of Life Committee.

### **Parking Enforcement**

Councilor Kretser asked about the current status of the parking enforcement position. Chief Racicot replied that it has been vacant for one month, adding that part time positions are more difficult to fill. When asked about the cost of the position, said that the position paid for itself out of parking fees, and provided comparison of numbers as to the cost of a part time v. full time position. These numbers essentially show at least break even between salary and benefit costs vis a vis fees collected. He also reminded the Council that the department does not look at fees as a revenue generator. There was discussion about the viability of a system such as used in Lake Placid; Mayor Calnon reported that it took about 18 months for those residents to become accustomed to the system. Chief Racicot indicated that a full time position would have enough work to do, and Mayor Calnon asked him to put together a proposal for a position. Councilor Kelly expressed concerns about hiring more police, and the Council agreed that the issue of parking needs to be addressed with an eye to long term plans for downtown development.

No action was taken at this time and no recommendation was sent to the Council.

### **Hiring**

Councilor O'Connell asked about the status of open positions in the City, and remarked that he has asked several times for a list of open positions. Mayor Calnon replied that the list needs to be completed in order to be distributed, and that Director of Human Resources, Ann Giard-Chase is in the process of compiling that list. Director Chase added that she is creating booklets for distribution to the

councilors. She noted that hiring is not centralized, and that department heads need to be aware to send out the letters. Councilor O'Connell expressed his frustration at not having information about the status of hirings when approached by his constituents, nor having a source to refer them. Relatedly, Councilor Kretser asked if we would need to put out an rfp for website design, and the mayor responded that that will depend on the potential costs.

No action was taken at this time and no recommendation was sent to the Council.

**Budget**

Mayor Calnon informed the Council that we are approaching the time to begin reviewing the budget, and that currently we are in decent shape, not as bad as expected. We now have a fund balance of 2.2 million, which was at 1.17 million earlier this year. He explained that we have typically built in a surplus, for example with healthcare, we expect the budget to be higher and create a reserve, but that it might be time to review and reform that process. He announced that the State Comptroller DiNapoli will be in the city on May 7<sup>th</sup> for an 11:00 press conference to give statements on the state's fiscal health.

No action was taken at this time and no recommendation was sent to the Council.